

Howard County Commission on Disabilities

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PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

The Howard County Commission on Disabilities (Commission) was established by statute in 1988 to:

- 1. increase public awareness
- 2. advise the County Government on local governmental programs, policies and budget
- 3. assist the County Government in ensuring compliance with the requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

STAFF AND CONTACT INFORMATION

The Howard County Commission on Disabilities is staffed by employees of the Department of Community Resources and Services:

Michelle Henry, Executive Secretary Erica Lewis, Staff Liaison Terry Zeigler, Recording Secretary



CONTACT INFORMATION

Michelle Henry, ADA Coordinator Howard County Office of ADA Coordination Department of Community Resources and Services 9830 Patuxent Woods Drive Columbia, Maryland 21046

www.howardcountymd.gov/ada

If you need this information in an alternate format, contact Erica Lewis at 410-313-6402 (voice/relay) or ealewis@howardcountymd.gov.

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^{*} no longer serving on the Commission

2020 Highlights

Increase Public Awareness

Hosted an Art Contest to Commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the ADA

t its annual awards ceremony. the Howard **County Commission on** Disabilities has historically recognized those who demonstrate outstanding efforts in advancing full participation in community life and promoting the



spirit and intent of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

In place of its annual awards event, and to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the ADA. the Commission hosted a virtual art contest with the theme:

ADA30. Disability. Equity. Inclusion. One County. Accessible to All.

Winners of the art contest were recognized in an ADA30 celebratory video featuring keynote speaker Judith E. Heumann, International Disability Rights Advocate. Ms. Heumann shared her pre-ADA experiences; she spoke about the growth and development of the disability rights movement; and of the collective responsibility of working to ensure that people with disabilities have equal rights and are fully included in their communities. Guest speakers were Christian Miele, Deputy Secretary of the Maryland Department of Disabilities, Dr. Calvin Ball, Howard County Executive, Jacqueline R. Scott, Director of the Department of Community Resources and Services and Elliott Finkelstein, Chairman of the Commission.

Art submissions were judged in four categories. First and second place winners for each category were announced in the ADA30 celebratory video.

Category: Pre-K through 5th Grade



FIRST PLACE

TITLED — All Together

ARTIST: SHUBHA KC

IN THE ARTIST'S OWN WORDS

This artwork is a drawing that was made by using color pencils, markers, crayons, and pencils. The artwork relates to the theme because it shows everyone being included despite their differences. It also shows equity because everyone is being treated fairly.

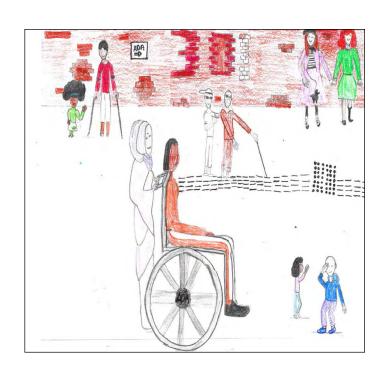
SECOND PLACE

TITLED — The Meeting Place

ARTIST: NEEMA JONES

IN THE ARTIST'S OWN WORDS

My artwork is a drawing using colored pencils, graphite pencils, and a Sharpie. In my drawing, there are people without disabilities walking with people who have disabilities coming together in one place.



Category: 6th through 8th Grade

FIRST PLACE

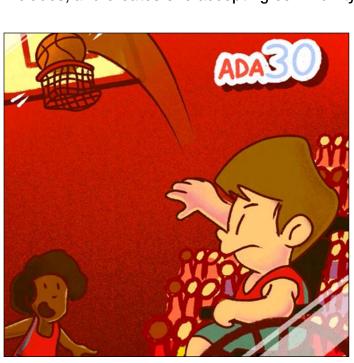
TITLED — The One Beat Within **Our Hearts for Change**

ARTIST: REEMA AYACHE

IN THE ARTIST'S OWN WORDS

This piece is a digital work made on an online canvas. It represents the change needed from within the heart to recognize, embrace and celebrate everyone's different abilities, whether physical or mental. The change is symbolized by the beating of the dragonflies' wings, and by the encompassing heart that feels for,

includes, and creates one accepting community.





SECOND PLACE

TITLED — Wheelchair Win!

ARTIST: AUBREY ARMSTRONG

IN THE ARTIST'S OWN WORDS

My digital drawing demonstrates disability, inclusion and equity. It shows a player with a disability that is in a wheelchair actively winning, and part of the game.

Category: 9th through 12th Grade



FIRST PLACE

TITLED — Daughter of **Deafness**

ARTIST: SHIVANI VARIA

IN THE ARTIST'S OWN WORDS

Charcoal and colored pencil drawing that depicts my upbringing as a kid of deaf adults or KODA. My artwork celebrates sign language, through signs that are important to me, like friends, love, and other signs of personal significance. I am proud to be a kid of deaf adults and I am proud to see inclusion of people like my parents in our county.

SECOND PLACE

TITLED — Community Tree

ARTIST: KAIYA JONES

IN THE ARTIST'S OWN WORDS

This piece is scratch art made with crayons and black paint. Here, the tree represents the Americans with Disabilities Act and how it protects people with disabilities. The stone path leading up to the tree invites community members to join and support their neighbors.



Category: Age 18 and Older

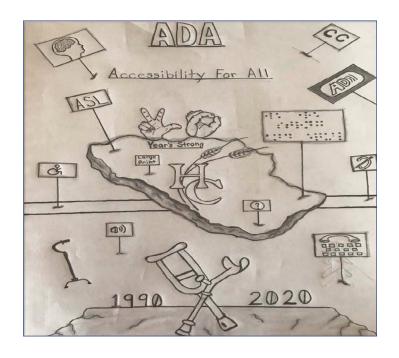
FIRST PLACE

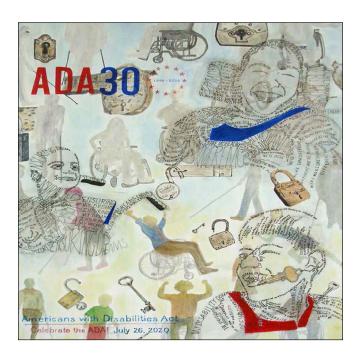
TITLED — We Are Equal

ARTIST: CHRISTY BETHOULLE

IN THE ARTIST'S OWN WORDS

Black and white drawing and sketch — An all-inclusive of ADA30. Disability. Equity. One County.





SECOND PLACE

TITLED — **Becoming Us**

ARTIST: KATHERINE WAH

IN THE ARTIST'S OWN WORDS

People experiencing disability have been seen as less than, locked away and marginalized. The ADA gives the keys to each of us to see every one of us as part of the whole of our community.

Increase Public Awareness, continued...

Hosted Presentation on Recreation & Parks Online Programs

Howard County residents with disabilities found their traditional day activity options impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. On September 16, the Commission's Provider Committee hosted a virtual presentation detailing online programs and activities developed and facilitated by staff of the Department of Recreation & Parks to help reduce social isolation and increase opportunities for engagement with peers.

Hosted Presentation on Human Service Grants

Howard County Government invests in the provision of critical human services by local nonprofit organizations through the Community Service Partnership (CSP) Program human service grants. On November 18, the Commission's Provider Committee hosted a virtual presentation offering an overview of the CSP program and current investments focused on improving the lives of individuals with disabilities. The presentation also included an update on the progress of the CSP Redesign Project.

Advises on County Government Programs, Policies and Facilities

Toured the Newly-Expanded Loan Closet

Members of the Commission participated in the official re-opening and tour of The Loan Closet of Howard County on January 9 at its new location on Riverwood Drive in Columbia. The new facility provides loans of medical equipment and offers expanded services and operating hours, as well as increased opportunities for volunteers and partnerships with community organizations.

Reviewed Plans for Electric Scooter Sharing Program

The Commission hosted discussions with County officials on February 24 and March 10 to review plans for the County's new E-scooter sharing program. The meetings focused on the permitting process, roles and responsibilities, enforcement, accessibility of the electronic rental process. and the potential impact that scooter ridership might have on impeding accessibility for pedestrians. Recommendations were provided to the Office of Transportation.



Participated in Housing Opportunities Survey

Howard County Government released an online survey on June 17 to gather public comments to be used in developing recommendations for the Housing Opportunities Master Plan for Howard County, Members of the Commission completed the survey and provided input on helping the County meet the housing needs of all residents, including those with low incomes, disabilities, and those in need of housing with physical accessibility features.

Advised on Regulation of Sign Language Interpreters

In a July 7 letter, the Commission requested the County Executive consider reaching out to Governor Larry Hogan regarding researching an appropriate State mechanism for regulating sign language interpreters and ensuring the quality of sign language interpreter services for deaf and hard-of-hearing constituents throughout Maryland.

Provided Input on Draft Ellicott City Watershed Master Plan

Howard County Government released the online draft of the Ellicott City Watershed Master Plan on July 21 for public comment. Members of the Commission provided input to help ensure that accessibility considerations are included in the rebuilding of the historic community.

Met With County Executive to Provide Updates on CR23-2018 Report Recommendations

Commissioners met with the County Executive and members of his leadership team on August 24 to provide a

status report on the Commission's CR 23-2018 report recommendations. The discussion included highlights of improvements in education, employment, housing, peer relationships, and transportation. It was noted that there has been significant progress in the area of website accessibility. The meeting also included a discussion of recommendations where progress has been slow due to fiscal and other constraints created by the COVID-19 pandemic.



Artistic Rendering of Ellicott City Watershed

Participated in Website Survey

Howard County Government released an online survey on September 8 seeking public feedback for use in re-designing the County's website. Members of the Commission completed the survey, providing input for use in helping the County improve the accessibility and user-friendliness of it website.

Met with Housing Official to Discuss Housing Options

The Commission met with a representative from the Department of Housing and Community Development on October 26 to review the latest information regarding housing options for residents with extremely low incomes. The discussion included progress made by the Housing Opportunities Master Plan task force, Disability Income Housing Units (DIHU), tenant-based rental assistance, funding for a regional Analysis of Impediments (AI) to Fair Housing coordinator, an affirmative housing marketing program, and home modification assistance for low-income renters.

Hosted Demonstration of ILA Pro Translation Service

The Commission met with a representative from the TranslateLive Company on October 26 for a demonstration of the ILA Pro. a cloud-based, real-time Speech-to-Text and Translation service recently purchased for County government use.

Participated in Behavioral Health Survey

The Howard County Health Department released an online survey on October 27, seeking public feedback to identify gaps in behavioral health services and to develop ways to improve the delivery of such services. Members of the Commission completed the survey, providing input to promote a better understanding of the mental health needs of the community and ways in which services can be improved.

Reviewed Plans for Patuxent Commons Housing Initiative

Patuxent Commons is a mixed-income housing development initiative of the Howard County Autism Society, designed to increase housing opportunities for persons with disabilities and promote intergenerational relationships. As required by the County's Subdivision, Land Development, and Zoning Regulations, a pre-submission community meeting was held on November 5. Members of the Commission participated in the public meeting to learn about this new initiative and offer feedback for increasing the availability of affordable, accessible housing in the County.



Artistic Rendering of Patuxent Commons Housing Initiative

Met With County Officials to Review Accessibility Matters

On November 10, the Commission met with department representatives from Inspections, Licenses, and Permits; Planning and Zoning; Public Works; and the Office of Transportation for accessibility updates. The discussion included adult changing tables in County buildings, self-evaluation and transition plans for elements in the public right-of-way, accessible parking, an update of the County Design Manual, construction of the new courthouse, and mid-block crossings on Main Street in Ellicott City.



Met With County Officials to Discuss 20-Year Master Plan

Conducted through the County's "HoCo by Design" to engage the general public in the master plan process, Commission members met with Department of Planning and Zoning officials on November 16. The discussion focused on the necessity of incorporating visit-ability, housing affordability, walkability, transportation, and other issues critical to people with disabilities into the development of the county's 20-year master plan. Commissioners shared their perspectives on open spaces and parks, employment, live-ability, aging-in-place, county office space, and other subjects related to county growth. Members of the Commission provided recommendations that centered on what the group saw as the top needs for the county as it continues to grow.

Participated in Transportation Town Hall

Howard County Government hosted a Transportation Town Hall on November 18 to present the latest information regarding transportation safety, Complete Streets, public transit, and other transportation-related topics. Members of the Commission participated in this forum.

Commission on Disabilities' Recommendations

- 1. Continue to explore equitable means of providing people with disabilities access to virtual programs, activities, and services offered by County Government, especially for those with disabilities who lack access to the internet.
- 2. Continue to ensure that virtual meeting platforms open to the public are accessible to people with disabilities who rely on assistive technology and/or auxiliary aids and services to access the internet.
- 3. Continue to fund innovative program initiatives which address unmet needs and gaps in services for individuals with significant disabilities and their families. As the Office of Community Partnerships works to re-design its human services grants program, ensure that grants are based not only on available funding but, more importantly, on needs-based criteria and are tied to current priorities identified by the County.
- 4. Consider creating a public service announcement similar to the one used in Baltimore City to promote safe use of scooters and to encourage responsible shared use of elements in the public-right-of-way.
- 5. As County entities work to revise the 1998 Ellicott City Historic District Design Guidelines, continue to elicit input on accessibility and other concerns.

Howard County **Commission on Disabilities** Department of Community Resources and Services

9830 Patuxent Woods Drive Columbia, MD 21046

PHONE 410-313-6400 (VOICE/RELAY) EMAIL CoD@howardcountymd.gov

This document is available in alternate formats by request to 410-313-6402 (voice/relay) or CoD@howardcountymd.gov